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ABSTRACTS

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Title : Customers' Heterogeneity And Store Patronage Intention: A Study Of Department Stores In Libya

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The retail industry of Libya has only recently been developed by private and public investments and as such, many stores including department stores are still in the initial stage of development. Libyan customers now have many options to which stores they will visit, but do they have the intent to visit their stores especially when Libyan customers have unique characteristics that might affect their intention to visit the new retailers in Libya? Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate whether customers' heterogeneity is able to explain customers' patronage intention to department stores in Libya. The results can assist the Libyan retailers especially department stores when changing their

marketing strategies for the Libyan market. Namely this study will help retailers and investors to understand Libyan customers' heterogeneity and their behaviors so that they can develop their retail strategies better. In addition, an understanding of patronage is a crucial issue for managers because it helps them to determine the intention of those customers who have the most intention to buy from them. Using Fishbein & Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Leszczyc & Bass (1998) understanding of customer heterogeneity, a framework depicting Libyan customers' heterogeneity factors and the implications on patronage intention was deduced. The specific objectives of this study were to (1) to explore variables affecting the relationship between

customer heterogeneity and customer patronage intention of the department stores in Libya; and (b) to examine whether customers heterogeneity is able to explain patronage intention of the department stores in Libya; as well as (c) to determine if store characteristics mediate the relationship between customer heterogeneity and customer patronage of department stores in Libya. The research approach used two methods, the first stage was a qualitative study of exploratory nature, and second stage was a quantitative study. Results of qualitative were used to develop the instrument in the next stage of research and to achieve the first objective of the study. For the quantitative study, data were collected by questionnaires which were distributed to 350 samples of customers of department stores in Libya in two cities Tripoli and Benghazi by mall intercept method, but the number of questionnaires fit for analysis was

only 280. In summary, the findings of this research pointed out that the demographic factors were not significant and did not impact on patronage intention, while socioeconomic and psychographic factors were significant and impact on patronage intention. On the other hand, store characteristics do not mediate the relationship between customer heterogeneity and intention to patronage.

Keywords: customer heterogeneity, demographics, Socioeconomic, Psychographic, store characteristics, patronage intention.